Master Recreation Plan Update

At DuPont State Recreational Forest (DSRF), we're looking forward to having a master recreation plan to help us balance the ecological and sustainability needs of the forest with the recreational desires of our more than 1.2 million visitors. While you wait with us, we thought you might like to review some of the research findings, field assessments and preliminary recommendations that were presented at the fourth public information drop-in session.
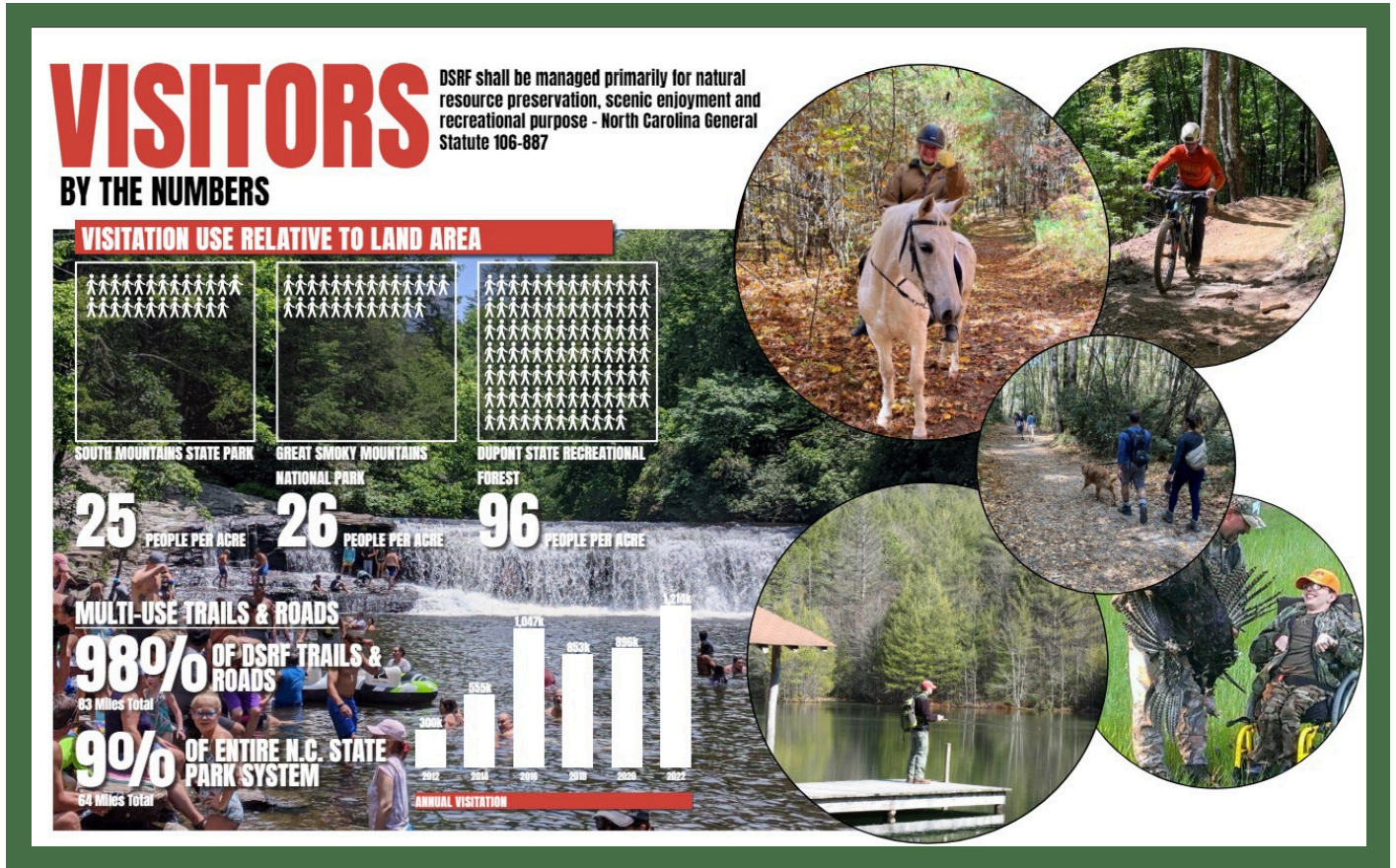
DuPont State Recreational Forest – A Snapshot

The infographic above provides an overview of DSRF as a natural area. The forest contains waterfalls, lakes, protected streams, and nearly 12,500 acres of forests, meadows, and granitic balds. What may come as a surprise is that 63 percent of DSRF is designated as a nature preserve, which means that it has restrictions regarding how it is managed and how it can be used.

DuPont State Recreational Forest – Regional Comparisons

If you've ever been to DuPont State Recreational Forest (DSRF), you know how popular it is. Sometimes, though, it's great to see the actual numbers. In the infographic above, you'll notice that DSRF has nearly four times more visitors per acre than the Great Smokey Mountains National Park, which is the most visited national park in America. That's a lot of visitors!

Public Input for the Plan

Public Input and Engagement Summary

Public Input Drop-Ins
349 People Signed In
9,525 Stickers Provided
6,250 Stickers Used
314 Comments Recorded
**Online Survey**
3226 On-Line Surveys
Parking Lot Intercept Survey
164 Surveys

Public input has played a critical role in the development of the DSRF master recreation plan. The consultants developing the plan conducted four public input drop-ins, an online survey, and in-person parking lot surveys. The consultants also meet with focus groups for 1) hikers/trail runners, 2) equestrians, 3) bikers, and 4) hunters/anglers. All of this public input supplemented the consultants' on-the-ground evaluation of DSRF's trails, interior roads, access areas, and facilities. The net result? A lot of data and opinions to use in creating an informed master recreation plan designed to balance the ecological and sustainability needs of the forest with the recreational desires of the diverse groups that come to DSRF.

On-the-Ground Findings – DSRF's Trail Repair Needs

What We Assessed:
**DSRF Trail Characteristics for Sustainability**

LOW MAINTENANCE NEEDS
26%

HIGH MAINTENANCE NEEDS
74%
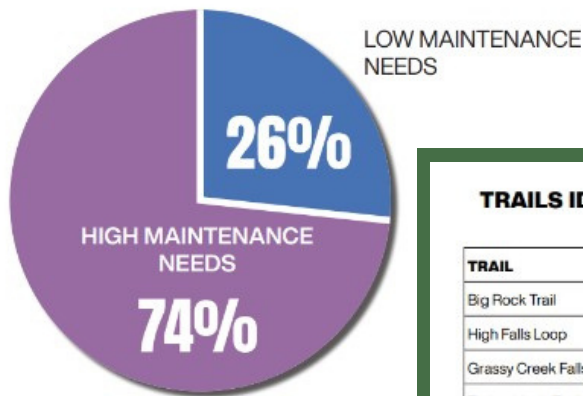
TRAILS IDENTIFIED BY ASSESSMENTS TO HAVE A HIGH/MODERATE NEED FOR HEAVY MAINTENANCE

TRAIL	MILES	TRAIL	MILES	TRAIL	MILES
Big Rock Trail	0.8	Stone Mountain Trail	1.0	Airstrip Trail	0.7
High Falls Loop	1.4	Rifle Trail	0.3	Grassy Creek Trail	1.1
Grassy Creek Falls	0.2	Ruffed Grouse Trail	1.0	Hickory Mountain Trail	1.6
Turkey Knob Trail	3.3	Sandy Trail	0.6	Hilltop Trail	1.0
Briery Fork Trail	1.5	Grassy Meadow Trail	0.9	Jim Branch Trail	1.3
Cascade Loop	3.1	Poplar Hill Trail	1.4	Isaac Heath Trail	0.9
Rocky Ridge Trail	1.5	Mine Mountain Trail	1.4	Micajah Trail	0.4
Corn Mill Shoals Trail	2.7	Cart Trail	0.5	Plantation Trail	1.2
Burnt Mountain Trail	2.2	Laurel Ridge Trail	0.9	Reasonover Creek Trail	3.0
Triple Falls Trail	0.6	Nooks Trail	0.4	Ridgeline Trail	1.4
Twin Oaks Trail	1.0	Cedar Rock Trail	1.5	Shoals Trail	0.4
Little River Trail	1.1	Three Lakes Trail	1.9		
				Total Miles	**44.2**

In addition to gathering public input, the consultant completed an on-the-ground assessment of all of DSRF's trails and interior roads. The assessment classified 74% of the trails as high maintenance and listed 35 trails (44.2 miles as having a high to moderate need for heavy maintenance. This type of assessment is critical as the forest as it plans for the forest's current and future needs. It also underscores the significant time and energy that DSRF's trails need in order for them to remain safe and enjoyable for the public.

Proposed Recommendations by the Numbers
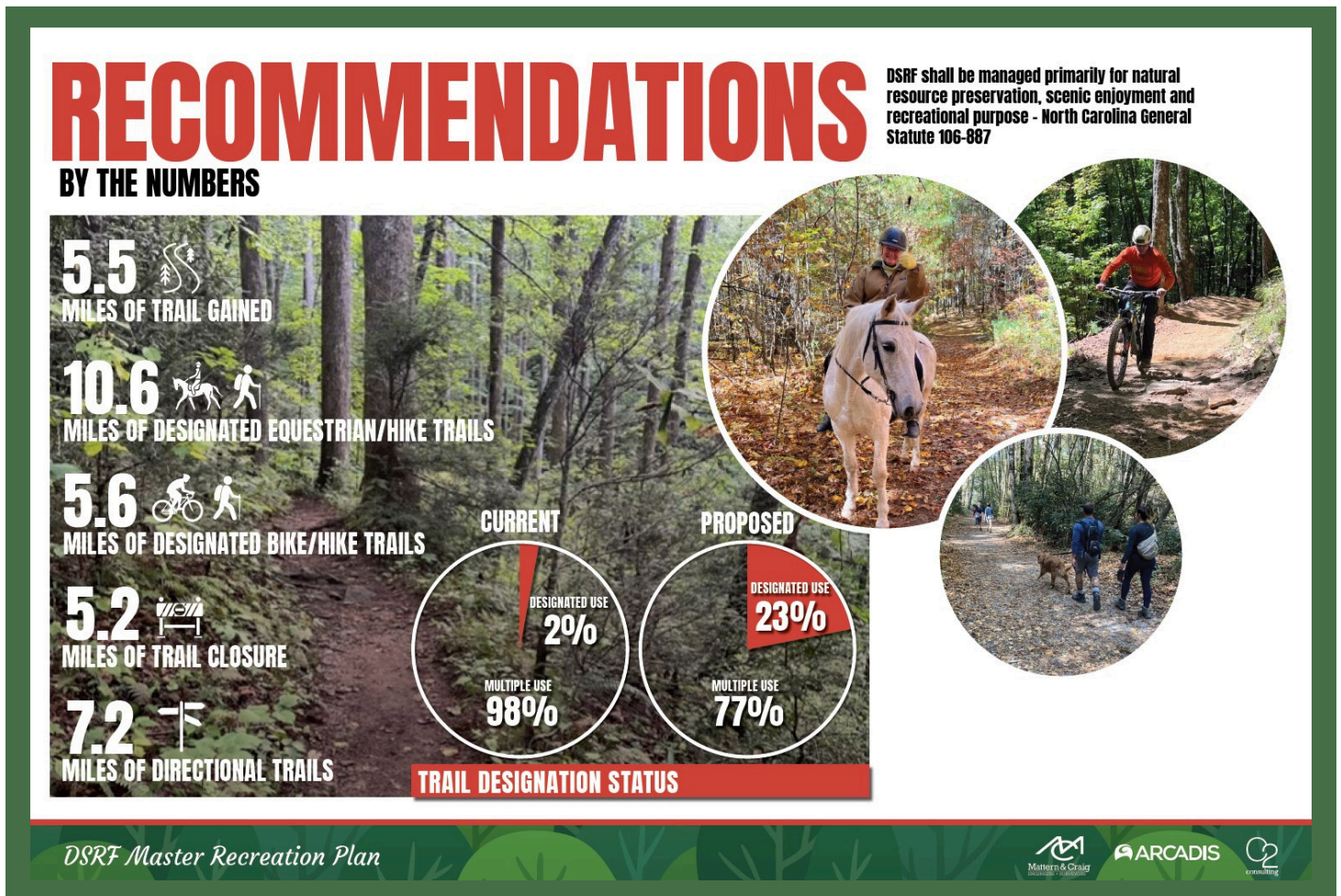
This infographic summarizes a few of the proposed recommendations seen in the initial draft of the DSRF master recreation plan. More than half of this infographic focuses on trail designation, which is a trail management tool that defines which trails are open to which type of user. The infographic compares the percentage of DSRF trails that are currently designated for specific user groups to the percentage that the consultant recommends become designated. It's important to remember that the percentage of multi-use trails will actually remain the same because the designation of trails will only impact bikers and equestrians; hikers, runners, dog walkers and all other foot traffic will continue to have access to all trails, which means that all trails will have some combination of user types.

Possible Changes to DSRF's Trail System

This map shows proposed new trails as well as proposed directional and designated trails. All of these proposed recommendations are aimed at increasing visitor safety, improving the visitor experience, and increasing the sustainability of the trails and the overall DSRF ecosystem. No trail will be limited to a single user group because hikers, dog walkers, and trail runners will continue to have access to all trails.

# What about E-bikes?

DSRF E-BIKE RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that electric bikes and similar vehicles are not allowed on DSRF's interior roads and trails shared by equestrians, cyclists, hikers and other user types. This is a continuance of the current management approach to electric bikes, in order to provide quality experiences for its traditional user groups described in NC General Statute 106-887.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

- Public responses showed concerns about compatibility with the DSRF's high-use, especially among local and regional participants (see chart below).

- E-bikes at DSRF would require more directional and designated trails. The public is highly satisfied with a majority of DSRF's trails remaining as multiple-use.

- DSRF lacks the enforcement capacity to integrate E-bikes safely into the trail system with a particular concern for the experiences of equestrian users.

PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Do you feel E-bikes are compatible with DSRF's current trail system?
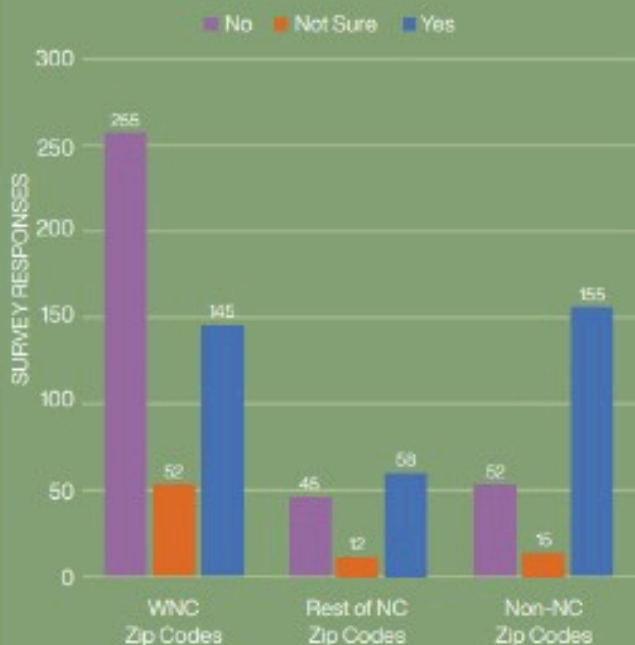
How supportive would you be of some trails being designated for certain uses?